

## **International Federation of Social Workers Report from the Regional President for Asia Pacific**

At the Tokyo Regional meeting in 2011, we had the pleasure of being the first IFSW region to welcome our then in-coming Secretary General, Rory Truell who in response, pledged to respond to the felt need to take the Federation through the process of change and to apply his experience as a bicultural social work professional to good use in guiding the work of the Federation across the globe. We were particularly thrilled to welcome him as someone who has come from our region.

We set off with the desire to invite more participative involvement among member countries so that social workers in the region could increase their awareness of the social issues in each other's country, learn from each other and engage in collaborative practice. I am happy to report that recently, the Japan Association of Social Workers has set up a sister organization relationship with the Singapore Association of Social Workers. This augurs well for the deepening of friendship and understanding between social workers from these two countries but I hope, that this initiative will catch on so that there will be more exchanges within our region and across other regions of IFSW as well. The world is a shrinking place and unless we take a world perspective to many of the contemporary problems that plague us, it would not be possible to find solutions to them.

I am also happy about this initiative for another reason. As I have mentioned in other contexts, as a Federation, IFSW's direct contact with social workers is through the social work leadership in member countries. The Federation has no possibility to engage with the vast majority of social workers across the world, to know the work that they do, to empathise with their professional struggles, to support them and to honour them for the personal sacrifices that they make that has defined our profession as one which suffuses with the noblest aspirations of the human spirit. With more person-to-person exchanges, many of the lifetime contributions that our members have made, will come to light in the international community and I would hope that the Federation would find some way of honoring more of these giants in our midst.

The task of appointing the 2013 host of the Asia Pacific Regional conference has been difficult and slow because of the requirement for countries to submit joint bids to IFSW and APASWE and at the same time, to allow for consultation to resolve the many issues involved. I am happy that we have accepted the bid from Philippines and look forward to hearing about their plans to host us in Makati City from 15 to 17 May, 2013.

Going forward, we will work out a process of consultation with our counterpart regional organization, the APASWE, so that we take on, within a shared time frame, all the anticipated issues of organizing such a joint-bid. I would like to place on record, my esteem and thanks to the President of APASWE for his understanding collaborative spirit.

I have indicated in the last report, the need for us to work in cooperation across the region on projects that have a regional dimension. One such is the increase of social work capacity to contribute to disaster prevention, mitigation, response and recovery. We have received a modest grant from the Federation and I am glad to report that this agenda will be deliberated at the Makati conference. Japan has agreed to provide leadership to this project and has been requested to involve other interested countries and to provide an implementation plan for the project.

We continue our search for indications of interest and resources for other projects such as collaborating across border on ensuring that guest workers receive the necessary support and legal protection in their host countries even as they make personal sacrifices to seek a better future for their families and at the same time, the welfare of their family, especially that of young children, are attended to back home.

We issued a call among member countries in the region, for donation towards supporting Japanese social workers who may be personally affected by the recent triple disaster. I hope that you will consider donating generously towards this cause in solidarity with our colleagues, which I hope could be extended to those in other countries who have suffered personal misfortune. The extension of such a scheme would be something worth further thought.

Much support was extended to a country in the region for developing the necessary instruments towards forming a national association and for it to secure membership in IFSW and with other countries on payment of dues and other issues on membership application.

We have worked hard to extend the membership in the region and I am happy to report that several countries will be recommended for membership at the General Meeting arising from this effort.

I would like to commend our Publications Secretary, with support from Griffiths University in Australia, for putting up two issues of the regional Newsletter in the short space of time that she has served in the Committee and each of the other members of the Regional Committee for the work and support given to me. The work has been made lighter and more fulfilling because of this.

As we look forward to support the IFSW in its Agenda for Action and other fresh initiatives as well as its work on deriving a fresh definition of social work pertinent to the times, I urge your active participation.

John Ang

President  
IFSW Asia Pacific  
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